

*Mr. Hilsman  
took by  
hand*

August 30, 1962

MEMORANDUM FOR McGEORGE BUNDY:

Wednesday at the President's press conference Mr. Richard Wilson of Cowles Publications said that he was told at the State Department that the Soviet military technicians arriving in Cuba "are probably going to operate missiles, similar to the Nike missiles."

Since Mr. Wilson was at the backgrounder I gave last Friday, I presume he was referring to me. If so, his statement was a gross distortion of what I actually said.

As you probably know, I gave this backgrounder at the request of the Under Secretary and Assistant Secretary Martin to try to put into perspective the press rumors of "65,000 Soviet combat troops landing in Cuba." At no time did I say that the Soviet Technicians were going to "operate" Nike-type missiles or that we had any hard information that surface-to-air missiles were included in the Soviet shipments.

Pertinent extracts from the transcript follow:

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MR. HILSMAN:... From what we have observed of this cargo, it appears that much of it will go into the improvement of coastal and air defenses,...

It may include surface-to-air missiles, which the Soviets also supplied Iraq and Indonesia, as you know. It may include. It's compatible with this.

Q Iraq and Indonesia?

MR. HILSMAN: That's right.

Q What are the range of them?

MR. HILSMAN: Surface-to-air missiles.

Q How big?

MR. HILSMAN: Well, it would be in about the same ballpark as our Nike, similar in the Soviet equipment to our Nike. Now, our judgment is that the limited, the very limited offensive capabilities of the Cuban armed forces will not be significantly improved by the equipment that we have identified today.

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MR. HILSMAN:... A large number of additional Soviet Specialists have arrived in Cuba during this same period. We estimate that this total is probably around 3,000 but it could be as much as 5,000. Now, some of the total are clearly economic technicians, agricultural and other kinds of economic technicians, and the rest are Soviet military specialists. And let me say this, that the numbers involved of additional Soviet military specialists is not incompatible with training and setting up the complex equipment that we have seen. You know, it's what you would expect to set up and train people in the military equipment that we have also seen.

There is no solid information that any of these military personnel are in combat military units.

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Q Roger, you say it may include surface-to-air missiles.

MR. HILSMAN: That's right.

Q You can't go any stronger than that?

MR. HILSMAN: Not at this point. Look, you see crates. You see other equipment like vans which you identify as radar vans and electronic communications vans. You look at crates, their size, their shape and everything else. We will know a lot more when something is done with them, you see. But at this stage it is compatible with surface-to-air missiles, you know. I would expect it to be.

Q They look like it?

MR. HILSMAN: But we don't know it yet. The equipment is compatible with it.

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MR. HILSMAN: Let me make it sure now. I never did say that we know that there are or we have seen surface-to-air missiles.

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Q Doesn't shipment of surface-to-air missiles indicate a fear of invasion or attack? Of course we have been hearing rumors that something has been under way about Cuba for some months now.

MR. HILSMAN: Well, I didn't say there was any surface-to-air missiles. We don't know whether there are. I said equipment is compatible with.

Roger Hillsman

CONCURRENCE: ARA-Mr. Martin